ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

JUVENILE FICTION

Without a Blink
Speranza's Press
978-0-9800327-0-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

Two friends—a girl and a child-sized butterfly—live on an island with smooth, sandy beaches where families frolic and play. The coast of the nearby mainland, however, is lined with mysterious, dangerous, jagged rocks. No one from the island has ever succeeded in landing on the mainland, because as soon as a boat approaches the rocky shore, a sudden, dark storm swirls out of nowhere and smashes the craft. The young friends, curious about this mystery, set out to explore.

Thanks to the butterfly's power of flight, they manage to reach the mainland despite the eerie storm. There they encounter a fantastical creature who pleads with them to help the rough shore to become soft and welcoming, and to help heal the angry force that creates the treacherous tempests. She teaches them a poem that will give them magical powers for twenty-four hours—but only if their intentions are positive. The book's title comes from the first line of the rhyme.

"This poem will work magic in your life," she says. "You will be better able to direct your energy toward beauty, truth, and goodness." Travelling between the mainland and the island—where they are joined by Speranza, their friend and former teacher—the pals hope to use the poem to solve the land's mysteries and difficulties.

This tale is the Jackie Adams' first publication, but she has spent years telling stories and writing plays for her granddaughters. Adams has a good sense of the elements of fantasy that appeal to young readers, and a good instinct for using storytelling and character to deliver a message about values—in this case, the idea that creativity inspired by good intentions can overcome negativity and evil. The book's message is delightfully positive and powerful, and lacks the treacle so often present in children's morality tales.

However, the book seems rather thin, as though it were an outline for a full-fledged young adult novel. Adams' writing style is too tight: she doesn't provide enough density of imagery or suspenseful development of plot points for readers to fully experience the emotional and intellectual arc of the story. Until she decides to employ her talent to develop a richer, more

completely realized book, this worthwhile effort will be most effective when read aloud slowly, to allow the tale to blossom and ripen in the imagination of the listener.

Without a Blink offers readers and listeners a wonderful approach to making the world a better place, a message that holds benefit and appeal for people of all ages.